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ABSTRACT

At a time when counseling services in general are under critical scrutiny, and human development instruction is relatively unknown in the academic sphere, adequate means must be achieved to illustrate the impact of these offerings on students and how they help to fulfill an institution's goals while supporting themselves. This paper describes an evaluation of a human development course offered on a college campus. The project attempts to discover the impact of the human development instruction course and the salient motivations of the students who participated. Students who had participated in the course were subsequently contacted by mail, and another group of participants were handed the questionnaires. Students generally regarded the course as rewarding. Their motivations for attending included the fact that it seemed interesting; that they wished to learn about themselves; or their friends recommended it. (Author/NG)

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STUDENT VIEWS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTION: A HUMANISTIC ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURE

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STUDENT VIEWS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTION:

A HUMANISTIC ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURE

Recent trends in the consumer movement suggest that this particular form of accountability, i.e., consumerism, is not far from the higher education profession (Semas, 1975). With reference to a total institutional viewpoint, Harvey (1974) has suggested that evaluation cannot merely follow the traditional models of systematic evaluation, especially in situations of fiscal crisis, inadequate prior evaluation and time constraints. Warnath (1971, 1972) and Trembley and Bishop (1973) have particularized the need for counseling personnel in particular to develop effective justifications for the expenditure of funds on the services they provide. These recommendations are especially provocative in light of Pine's (1975) admonition that what is needed in the age of accountability is reasonable evidence that the changes and new directions of the counseling profession are effectively meeting the needs of students -- that counseling works -- that it is an essential service and not a frill.

Wysong (1974) has presented an overview of practices in evaluating total guidance programs in settings that range from small rural schools to large inner city schools in the State of Ohio. He maintains that "the important question facing administrators and counselors is not 'What can guidance do?' But rather 'What are guidance personnel doing in their own school and how

can it be continually improved?' (p. 37)" As if addressing this question, Krumboltz (1974) provides a paradigm that collates counselor accomplishments with costs, thus effecting a definition of the domain of counselor responsibility, the promotion of self-improvement and the use of student behavior changes as evidence of counselor accomplishments.

The area of human development instruction, often performed by the college counseling center, is no less in need of sound procedures to illustrate its worth than is the dyadic or group counseling function. Since human development instruction does not have as its objective the acquisition of a specific amount of content, measurement of its effect has often been problematic at best. However, it is stressed that humanistic objectives and assessment are also important in accountability (Combs, 1973), and to the degree that these criteria are eschewed, both students and the institutions that exist for them are not fully served.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to discover the impact of a human development instruction course, or its effectiveness, and (2) to identify the salient motivations that brought students to the experience, since the offering was not required in any curriculum and occasionally even dismissed as "worthless," or worse, by some faculty advisors who knew little, if anything, about the course.

METHOD

Two groups of students were assessed regarding their perceptions of the human development instruction course and their reasons for taking it; Group 1 consisted of all students who had taken Student Development 101 -- Dynamics of Human Interaction -- from its inception in the Spring, 1973, semester, through and including the Fall, 1974, semester; Group 2 comprised all students who had taken the course in the Spring, 1975, semester.

Using address information from the college files, 155 questionnaires were mailed to Group 1 students, along with a return envelope. Group 2 students were handed the questionnaire by their instructors at the end of the course and requested to fill it out confidentially. Group 2 consisted of 65 students.

Students could respond to each item in the "effectiveness of the course" part by indicating either "Yes," "No," or "N/A." The part of the questionnaire that dealt with "original reason for taking the course" presented a simple option of checking a particular item or not.

The percentage of responses to each item was computed, and a correlation computation was made to observe the similarity in responses between the two groups of students. A median test, based on chi-square for a 2 x 2 table, was performed to determine whether it was probable that the two groups were drawn from populations with the same median, or to test the null hypothesis

that no significant difference existed between the student groups in ratings of the effectiveness of the course.

RESULTS

Because many students could not be located in Group 1, and since the questionnaires were returned anonymously (at the option of the respondent), the response rate was not as high as anticipated. Thirty-eight (25 percent) of the 155 questionnaires were received by the counseling center. On the other hand, fifty-three (82 percent) of the questionnaires were completed by students in Group 2. These results are presented in Table 1.

In general, the results of the questionnaire indicated an extremely positive student perception of the effectiveness of the human development instruction course, with the exception of Item 4. However, inasmuch as many of the students who responded to the item had not yet transferred, or perhaps were not planning to do so, this result was not deemed especially negative, as evidenced by the large "N/A" response. Table 2 illustrates the findings of the "effectiveness" part of the questionnaire.

Table 3 indicates the percentages of students from each group that selected various "reasons" for enrolling in the course. It would appear from these data that peer influence (reason 1) and the fact that the course looked interesting (reason 8) were the most potent "motivators" in bringing students to enroll in the

course, especially in a non-required elective such as this one. That the course provided an opportunity to learn about others (reason 10) and about oneself (reason 9), also seems to have influenced the students' decision to enroll. It would also appear that reasons sometimes imputed to student self-selection of a course, such as it being "easy," or not knowing what else to take, or suggestion by a professional staff member (reasons 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively), in fact may not be as influential in student decision-making as they are sometimes thought to be.

A correlation of .97 between the groups on the "effectiveness" dimension and .93 on the "reasons" dimension leads to the inference that little difference existed in the response patterns of the two groups. The median test showed a difference at the .05 level, but the difference was minute ($X^2 = 3.869$).

DISCUSSION

Several limitations of this survey should be stipulated: (a) the respondents in Group 1 were perforce self-selected, thus perhaps only those with a pressing need to provide feedback did so, and the 25 percent who did respond may not have been representative of the total group; (b) the reliability and validity of the instrument are untested; (c) the survey assumes that, in fact, the first part can be interpreted as a measurement of the "effectiveness" of the course.

The data led to the inference that Dynamics of Human

Interaction, a three-credit elective offered through the counseling center with the central purpose of personal development, was being well-received by students in terms of its value to them and its effectiveness in achieving its goal as a part of the counseling program.

Students tended to elect the course because it appeared interesting, they wished to learn about themselves and/or others, or on the recommendation of friends. Reasons such as the course being "easy," or being recommended by a professional staff member, appeared to have little effect in bringing a student to the course.

Of interest to some administrators was the fact that in providing student development experiences in this fashion, income was generated by the counseling center at no additional expense to the college.

At a time when counseling services in general are under critical scrutiny, and human development instruction is relatively unknown in the academic sphere, adequate means must be achieved to illustrate the impact of these offerings on students and how they help to fulfill an institution's goals while supporting themselves.

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Table 1

Percent of Returned Questionnaires from Student Groups

	Group 1	Group 2
Semester in attendance	Spring, 1973 Fall, 1973 Spring, 1974 Fall, 1974	Spring, 1975
Population N	155	65
Return N	38	53
Percentage	25%	82%

Table 2

Student Responses to Items Regarding the Effectiveness of "Dynamics of Human Interaction"

ITEM	YES		NO		N/A	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Was DHI a meaningful experience for you?	95	100	5	0	0	0
2. Do you feel that the course helped you while you were at the College?	89	90	8	7	3	2
3. Should we continue offering DHI?	95	96	2	0	3	3
4. If you continued college after here, did DHI transfer?	21	24	13	2	66	73
5. If you were to make the choice again, would you take DHI?	95	92	5	6	0	1

Table 2 (continued)

ITEM	YES		NO		N/A	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
	%	%	%	%	%	%
6. Do you feel that your instructor was effective?	84	96	13	0	3	3
7. One of the reasons DHI is offered is to make counseling services more available for more students. Do you feel that this is accomplished?	82	85	13	11	5	3
8. Was DHI a "growth" experience for you?	87	94	8	5	5	0
9. Did you learn about yourself (goals, attitudes, feelings, etc.)?	89	90	5	7	6	2
10. Did you learn about others?	87	96	2	0	11	3

Table 2 (continued)

ITEM	YES		NO		N/A	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
	%	%	%	%	%	%
11. Would you recommend DHI to other students?	82	96	2	1	16	2
12. Do you feel that DHI should be a credit-granting course?	74	85	5	9	21	5
13. The catalogue title of DHI is "Student Development 101." Do you feel that the course helped you in your development as a student and as a person?	79	83	8	7	13	9

Table 3

Student Responses to Reasons for Enrolling in "Dynamics of Human Interaction"

REASON	Group 1 %	Group 2 %
1. Recommended by friend(s)	55	70
2. Liked the instructor	42	36
3. Needed three credits	32	40
4. Was an "easy" course	24	17
5. Didn't know what else to take	13	8
6. Suggested by faculty member	29	25
7. Suggested by counselor	39	32
8. It looked interesting	82	72
9. Wanted to learn about myself	58	60
10. Wanted to learn about others	66	62
11. Wanted to meet people	53	60